



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

January 25, 2005

Mr. M. Gustave Pick  
Scott, Hulse, Marshall, Feuille, Finger & Thurmond, P.C.  
P. O. Box 99123  
El Paso, Texas 79999-9123

OR2005-00679

Dear Mr. Pick:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 217947.

The Ysleta Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for "bid tabulations for [bid number] 24-902-013CSP-BD [including] the tabulation of the scoring criteria." You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.104 excepts from public disclosure "information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder." Gov't Code § 552.104(a). The purpose of this exception is to protect a governmental body's interests in competitive bidding situations. *See* Open Records Decision No. 592 (1991). Section 552.104 requires a showing of some actual or specific harm in a particular competitive situation; a general allegation that a competitor will gain an unfair advantage will not suffice. *See* Open Records Decision No. 541 at 4 (1990). Section 552.104 does not protect information relating to competitive bidding situations once a contract has been awarded and is in effect. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 306 (1982), 184 (1978).

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<sup>1</sup> Although you also raised section 552.103, you do not submit arguments in support of a claim under section 552.103. Therefore, you have waived any claim of exception from disclosure under this section of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; *Dallas Area Rapid Transit v. Dallas Morning News*, 4 S.W.3d 469 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (governmental body may waive section 552.103); Open Records Decision No. 663 (1999) (governmental body may waive section 552.103).

You inform us that the submitted information relates to an ongoing competitive bidding situation. You state that, as of the date of your request for this ruling, the district "is in negotiations with the possible winning bidder in an attempt to improve the overall pricing of the contract." You assert that the release of the submitted information at this time would jeopardize the district's bargaining position and could interfere with its ability to negotiate the most advantageous contractual terms and conditions. You have submitted an affidavit in support of your arguments. Based on your representations, the submitted affidavit, and our review of the information in question, we conclude that the district may withhold the submitted information at this time under section 552.104. We note that the district may no longer withhold this information under section 552.104 once the negotiations have been concluded and the contract has been awarded and is in effect. *See* Open Records Decision No. 541 at 5 (1990).

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877)673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental

body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512)475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Cindy Nettles  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CN/krl

Ref: ID# 217947

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Gabriel Garcia  
Triple M Recreation /GameTime  
596 Coronado Road  
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(w/o enclosures)